



An eventful month - from the Editor

Aside from being terribly late, this month's newsletter has a rather different look. This was not planned, and next month is likely to be different as well.

What happened? Airtouch did. 9 months into my contract there, things suddenly ended. In most regards, this proved to be progress, but they did have a well installed version of Framemaker which enabled me to produce the newsletter in but a few hours. I thought I had a linux version of it at home, but this weekend discovered that Adobe isn't kidding with the beta description. I was back to square one. To add to the fun, my new job site proved to be an extremely busy one, at least for this month of July. I think and hope it will calm down by August. I need more diving!

I did manage to make it to Monterey for July 4th. I have a new Aquashot camera housing and strobe and needed to give it a shot. So I finally managed to get out of bed and on the road by 11, got to Carmel by 1. "Should have been here in the morning." Or "should have been here on Sunday." I was too tired in both cases. What had been stellar visibility was started to drop quickly. I started the day at the South end of Monastery. The waves occasionally looked mid-sized, but mostly it was nothing. Divers leaving described the viz as arm's length, so I didn't bother to bring the camera. Oops. I don't know what kind of arms they had, but I only went out to 30some feet and found viz in excess of 20', along with what would have been good subjects. So it goes. I still had a fun dive.

I then drove over to MBDC for some airfills and to set up for a Metridium dive. Viz was supposed to be better on this side of the bay, but I found that there was lots of stuff in the water once I got out past the kelp line. Luckily I had dropped right down on the pipe, so it was easy going. I could only see about 7-8 feet clearly, but it was good enough to try using the camera. Results showed the particle matter, but it was still a legitimate test. One very large crab had at it with me.

I wanted to see the fireworks, and get in a night dive, so I paired the two events together. I had kicked out to near the elbow when the show started. It was ok. I think I was spoiled by the New Year's show at the Embarcadero. As it ended, time to drop down. Surprisingly, not a single other diver on this night. I thought at least some would get in a last dive for the holiday weekend. Perhaps the conditions ran them off. It had the same murk factor, plus I had managed to drop my compass on the earlier dive. Needless to say, I didn't stray far from the wall. More giant crabs roamed the sand flats, along with a couple jellies that seemed to contain little jellies on its back (?).

Hopefully all of you managed to get in some of the great conditions June/July offered. Some very good club trips are coming up as well. Jade Cove is this week. Sadly, no such luck for me. I'll be dragon boat racing on Saturday in Foster City. If you do make an event, or just go diving, how about writing something for the newsletter? --Jason O'Rourke

The Reef Rap

July 18th - July General Meeting: Mike Grummell speaks on trips to the Farallones.

July 21-23 - Jade Cove Dive trip: Dive Big Sur and (almost guaranteed) return with jade! Anthony Singleton coordinates this camping/diving trip. See details on page 3.

July 22nd - Monterey Harbor Cleanup Dive. Contact Dave Clayton if you're available to help. Divers and topside assistance requested. (925) 689-8840, drc@ccnet.org.

July 30th - Cypress Point club charter: \$65 for 3 tanks offshore. Nitrox can be arranged for \$8/tank in advance, \$10 on board. Contact Jim Vallario 415-566-0784.

August Events: Bob Miche heads up the Ab reopener. Call for details. (415) 661-5540.

August 15th - August General Meeting:

August 20 - 22 - Peace boat club dive trip: 3 days in the Channel Islands! Check with Jim Vallario for current availability. \$305, with unlimited nitrox option for \$75 additional.

September 19th - September General Meeting: Our speaker is Ellen Gartside, marine biologist

September Events: Join Jim Radley for a Back to School dive, and hunt the elusive abalone with Tom Leroux.

October - Mexico: 7-10 day Diving Excursion to the Yucatan Mainland for Reef, Deep, Cavern and Cave diving with sidetrips to the Jungle and Mayan Ruins. Curt Degler Coordinates - cdegler@best.com (707)-570-0457.

October Events: Roy Didier hosts the Ab Feed; haunt the deep with Robert Johnson leading a Halloween Dive to Cemetery Reef. Bill Palmer and Ann Gilmore will be coordinating a kayak trip.

Join the E-mail Discussion site! The club forum on egroups is getting good use now. In addition to reminders of upcoming planned events, members have used it to put together short notice dive trips. You can join it at <http://www.egroups.com/group/sfreedivers>. If you have any questions about how to join or use his forum, e-mail Curt Degler at cdegler@best.com.

Be a Buddy! A current roster is included in this month's newsletter. If you are thinking about going diving on a date when no club activities are planned, you can always call up some people and see if others are up for water. If there are errors in your entry, please contact Loretta at 415-305-7517 or by email at lorettalowe@earthlink.net.

Be an Author/Photographer! I need your story reports on club events! I also welcome UW photos that had good contrast (for B&W printing). If you travel away for diving, we also want to hear about your experiences. Details for submission are on the back page. Please don't send Word documents! Text only please- there are too many silly viruses attached to MS documents.

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July Speaker Biography:

My name is Mike Grummell I will be speaking at your club meeting on 7/18/00. I am a professional Paramedic / Fireman, and a certified scuba diver and a freediver. I enjoy photography as a hobby and have been doing it for 7 years. During the years of 1995, 1996 and 1997 - I made some 4 trips to the Southeast Farallon Island as a deck hand / medic for a team of researchers and film crew who were putting together a documentary on Great White Sharks for National Geographic. During the filming process I was allowed to take my own photos (so long as it didn't interfere with my duties as a deck hand). It is those photos and the stories that go with them that I wish to share with you and your club.

Beach Dive Report - June 17th, 2000

On Saturday morning Bill Donnelly, Kirill Semenov and I met at the Aquarius Dive shop, rented some tanks, then met at Coral Street, Pacific Grove for a dive. Since earlier in the week the weather was unseasonably warm, there was a huge plankton bloom throughout much of Monterey Bay.

At Coral Street visibility was an unusually good (for this day) 15 feet. It is a pretty site with easy access. We saw the usual critters, lemon nudibranchs, decorator crabs, rock fish and schools of small fry.

For our second dive we were going to go to Butterfly House in Carmel, but in the name of expediency, chose to dive at San Carlos beach and look for the metridium fields. It was pea soup, 5 feet visibility with a sandy bottom. This dive was a test of navigation skills! Directly opposite the pump house is a pipe, follow it to the end, take a 110 degree (or was it 210 degree? ---navigation is not my forte) reading and go to the fields. Kirill found the pipe and was busy searching for treasure with his underwater metal detector while Bill and I went off in search of the metridiums.

Bill's regulator was leaking throughout both dives so before we reached the fields we had to return. But we did find one nice big specimen. Kirill found two aluminum cans. Immediately after the dive we changed; Bill took off to fix his regulator, Kirill stayed to picnic on the beach, and I went to San Jose to run some errands. The afternoon proved gorgeous, comfortably warm with clear blue skies---such a contrast from diving in cold dark pea soup. -- Ann

IMPORTANT NOTE: Michelle Chang, one of our entertainment directors, has a new email address. This is not yet reflected on the backpage. Her new address is: melemaikai@yahoo.com

Jade Cove Dive and Camping Trip *July 21st - 23rd, 2000*



Mark your calendar for the Jade Cove dive. Jade Cove is located in Big Sur 70 miles south of Monterey. The camp site is Plascett Creek Camp grounds. This will be a three day camping trip. Bring your tent, and camping equipment. Call Anthony for further information (415) 751-3617

Franko, the Bag Man
By Kenneth Gwin
Photo by Michael Bjornbak

Last month, while Ann Gilmore was leading an official club sanctioned event, a splinter group lead by Frank Onstein made an unofficial excursion to the Santa Barbara Channel to dive the famous oil drilling platform, "Grace." Frank met the club by chance at the Ab Opener this Spring and decided to join. When he found out about the opportunity to dive an oil rig off the dive boat "Peace," he passed the information on to the club. So, Frank and his band, including myself, Kazu Shibao, Frank Matzkies, Armin Luggens, and outsider, Paul "Bakalite" Braunbehrens, made the trip south for the one day adventure. The seas were calm, only a slight current was running, and the sun was nearly out.

For any of you who have been on any of the rigs, you know what an unusual dive they can be. The first 60-80 feet of this dramatic structure were entirely covered with small white metridiums and mussels. Deeper in, the colors exploded into the pink and orange corynactus palette we see in Monterey. At about 120 feet, spooky giant metridiums sprouted out of this colorful background., framed like white ghosts by the deep blue beyond. The abyss calls. We found an octopus. A mola mola was spotted drifting through. And in the deeper waters, hidden in the rich encrusting growth were abundant large scallops. Photo evidence, as Franko, the Bag Man, makes his get away with his legal limit.

Club Roster: A few names couldn't fit on the two pages. I'll try to fix that soon!

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Diving in Roatan, Honduras

By Barry Weinstein

"Make sure you pack your dive book and computer, along with a change of clothes, with your carry-on" the letter from my travel agent warned, in case your luggage doesn't arrive with you. And sure enough, it was advice well-heeded, as my luggage arrived the next day from TACA Airlines (the resort let me borrow their diving gear for free). But in spite of that inconvenience, Roatan offered tremendous diving. Here is a summary of my trip, taken in early June:

The Diving- Absolutely beautiful coral that has all the nooks and crannies you would want. There are caves, walls, overhangs, and shelves that provide for both unlimited exploring and shelter for fish. The color of the coral is magnificent, from flaming red to blue to yellow. Sea life that I saw included parrotfish, needlefish, barracuda, angelfish, stingray, turtles, crabs, shrimp, lobster, octopus (of course I had run out of film when I saw it), and a lot of other fish of which I didn't know their names. Visibility was approximately 80 feet and water temperature was about 75 degrees. Interestingly enough, almost everybody wore some kind of bodysuit when diving. Being used to Monterey I was tempted not to but was told there are areas where it may get a bit nippy. The resort I stayed at (the Inn of Last Resort-will talk about that later) had a boat go out three times a day (all single tank dives)- at 8:30, 10:30, and 2:30. In addition the resort had a lagoon which had access to the open water where you could do unlimited diving. I am a new diver so haven't been to places such as Cozumel or Belize. The other divers in Roatan, however, had been to those places and they told me they thought Roatan had the best diving they had seen (especially for the money).

Resorts- All the resorts are focused on diving. The Inn of Last Resort is very low-key and informal. It is smaller and they even go by the honor system-you mark down the sodas, drinks, etc you have each day. You get to know almost everybody and it is the kind of place where, if you get an overseas call at the main office, they know who you are and will even run down to the boat you're just getting off to tell you to take a call (it literally happened to me). Anthony's Key Resort is the most popular resort, and is 'where the action is'. You can stay in a room on your own small island and it definitely has a more tropical exotic appeal than the former (attention: you will need a boat every time you leave your room and you may not have air conditioning). There is, moreover, a corporate feel about it. Another highly regarded one is Coco's View, but I didn't visit it. At Inn of Last Resort three meals are included. The food served was things such as shrimp creole, lobster, cream of cauliflower soup, chicken with salsa, etc., and it was fantastic. The only drawback is that there is a fixed menu-no selection (except for breakfast). So if you don't like what they're serving you're out of luck'. I'm told Anthony's has great food also. Price for the Inn was about \$1,100 for a week, including everything but tips, where \$75 for a week is recommended.

The Island- Roatan is about 40 miles from the mainland and, although it is approximately 35 miles long, it doesn't have much to offer except for diving. If you're looking for interesting culture, quaint villages, rainforest, etc. this is not the island for you. The people, though, are wonderful and friendly (and many speak English). Interestingly, the prettiest part of the island is opposite where most of the resorts are- it is on the eastern part. I would strongly recommend renting a motorcycle or car and traveling east towards Jonesville (the most picturesque town) and Oak Ridge. Near Oak Ridge is the Mangroves Tour, which is like the bayou in Louisiana. Take a tour down a 10 foot wide canal thru trees and roots on a banana boat-amazing! Make sure the guide takes you as far as Emerald Bay-one of the most beautiful bays I have ever seen (there's about 5 shades of green water going down to about 50 feet).

Last items- Guanaja and Utila are nearby islands that offer great diving and are a lot more primitive, if that's the way you want to go. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at BarryW_99@yahoo.com. I even have some pics I can share with you. The website of the travel agent I used (whom I really liked) is <http://www.diving-adventures.com/Roatan.shtml>.